

LOVE-SONGS AND ELEGIES

**LOVE-SONGS
AND ELEGIES**
BY MANMOHAN GHOSE

LONDON: ELKIN
MATHEWS, VIGO STREET
1898

TO LAURENCE, AND
THE REMEMBRANCE
OF HAPPY HOURS, I
DEDICATE THESE
VERSES

*No. III. of these poems appeared in
The Academy: Nos. X. and XII.
in Primavera (Oxford, 1890).*

LOVE-SONGS AND ELEGIES

I

HEAP ruby upon amethyst,
Exhaust the deep seas of their pearl:
My lips are richer, being kissed
By the sweet rose lips of a girl.

Her heart is white with angel truth,
Her heart is red with love's own fire;
She is the snowdrop of my youth,
She is the rose of my desire.

II

GREAT wealth once was mine,
Riches such as keep
Not the Ocean waves,
Memory, nor Sleep.

Wealth so great, so vast
Never back to me
Ocean waves can wash,
Sleep nor Memory.

Once my own sweet thoughts
Seemed like richest gold;
But to breathe, more rich,
Once, than hoards untold.

Youth and health; the flowers;
Peace; the stars above;
Ev'n my heart, 'twas mine,
Ere I met with Love.

From all bitter shafts
Safe, 'twas mine to be.
Ev'n from her bright eyes,
Ere Love met with me.

Till like some great king,
Now in battle deemed
Resistless, earth to me
One green empire seemed.

But to bring me sleep,
Day in purple ceased;
And for my fresh eyes
Rubies dropped the east.

In the gardens of bliss
The nightingale did moan,
And it seemed his throat
Throbbled for me alone.

For me, for me alone,
Skies and clouds and day,
The sweet, solemn world
Did its great pageant play.

All my own I was:
Like a flower apart,
Dwelt in its own breath
To itself my heart.

Love, the lord of things,
To whom bends in awe
The whole earth, from his heavens
All my glory saw.

Love, the lord of things,
All my riches viewed
And, disdainfully
Smiling, by me stood.

O how beautiful
Shone he, fierce like gold:
Insupportable
Even to behold!

All my hoarded wealth;
Trees, thoughts, flowers, my lone
Estates; this wide earth;
All that seemed my own;

To her, the world's dear queen,
Her, to whom in strong
Tenure, all things rare
And beautiful belong.

To her hands, like gifts,
Night and sleep and wave,
The roses, even my heart,
All, to her he gave.

All my idle robes
Stripped he, and my shame;
My soul's nakedness
Drest in burning flame.

I who for myself
Once sufficed indeed—
Of another now
O what utter need !

Beggared, poor, despised,
Now I go to wait
Hungry, at her full
Doors, and supplicate

From her eyes divine,
One dear shaft of bliss ;
From her lips so rich
The fragment of a kiss.

III

HEART, my heart, so fond to linger,
Come away !

Once with beckoning finger,
Sweetly once she bade thee stay.
Once what heavenly bliss was thine,
All her love, and poured like wine !
Come, O come, make no delay.

Hers are those bright looks she gave thee,
Hers alone !

What can lingering save thee ?
This sweet touch or that soft tone ?
Love no tearful claim can make :
Hers to give and hers to take ;
Yes, the kisses all her own.

O the wealth that back she closes !
Lips divine !

Cheeks, my only roses,
Eyes, that Hesperus outshine !
All her sweetness takes she home :
Back into my bosom come,
Heart, my heart, for thou art mine.

Out, alas ! I do remember :
 Hers thou art !
Given that rich September,
 Never from her breast to part.
Bitter, bitter is thy lot,
To be hers that loves thee not,
Mine no longer, breaking heart !

IV

ABOVE her, hushed, the green, sweet darkness
thrills :

Cool waters in her ear come fresheningly ;
Unclouding, like a moon, Irene feels
The fearless glory to be simply she.

All that the sun, impassioned, leaps to kiss
She gravely gives ; and to the light complete,
Stands lovely, with no shame to tinge her bliss.
Eve in her Paradise was not so sweet.

What charm now, sister in simplicity
To noble flowers, with shame's false tyranny done,
Glorying in her sweet humanity
With grass, earth, air and sunlight to be one !

Glowing she stands in the pure face of heaven,
In marriage with enchanted Nature given !

V

THE KISS OF CUPID

SHADED soft in greenest day
Beauty found her :
Dimness all around her,
Like a sunbeam down she lay.
Her crimson cheek had drooped, oppressed,
To the flowers, in happy rest,
Her tired eyes bequeathing :
Breezes her sweet tresses kept ;
Leaves took vigil : and she slept,
Softly breathing.

Lightly by Love laughing came,
Light leaves under :
Stood in passionate wonder,
Held above her like a flame.
Sleeping, but one arm in charge ;
Dreamless lay her eyelids large,
Mouth like petals drifted.
Quivering stood he, while her breast,
Heaving for his heart's unrest,
Sank and lifted.

Down he knelt, and softly crept
 Towards the sleeper;
 Drank the glory deeper.
"O, one little kiss!" he wept;
"Twixt my golden wings I glow;
Thou art white and cool, like snow,
 Soothe me, sleep's own sister!"
Breathing her sweet breath he knelt,
And with lips that, creeping, felt,
 Richly kissed her.

One more! Watch there's none to keep!—
 Back he started!
 O'er her, wings departed,
Hung the soft and shadowy Sleep;
Murmuring, "O, what hast thou done,
Love, that moon and earth and sun
 Back to chaos beatest:
Troubling with that kiss of flame
All that's softest in my name,
 All that's sweetest!"

VI

MYVANWY

SPRING, that in greenest shade, all wet, un-
guessed by any,
 Hidest some flower, to sway for the cool
 showery breeze,
 Now that Myvanwy's face the great thronged
 city sees,
Hast thou a blossom yet more fresh and rainy?

Ocean-cave, that never through dimmest water
 dayward
 Thy bright pearl sufferest, where sea-weed
 forests keep
 Safe from the diver's hand the radiance of the
 deep,
How shall I keep her heart so wild and wayward?

Unrebuked as the breeze, so joyous is she, a
 creature
 So like the wild, free things of the pure forest,
 a part
 Of mountain and fern, that I tremble to think
 her heart
Into green leaves should glide and be lost in
 Nature.

O so beautiful is her every step and motion,
Surely the earth must feel and quiver at her
tread !

And O, the grace of her hand, the poise of
her head !

Surely the air must know it and thrill with
emotion.

Out in the garish noon she walks, and such
light presses

On my faint heart, that I scarce for gazing see!

Lost in the black shadow of my love's jealousy,
I grudge her cheek to the sun, her hair to the
breezes.

Street, all thronged with eyes, ah ! look not so
at Myvanwy !

Life, that streamest on so various and bright,
Cease, for thou wooest, but canst not win her
sight !

World, she must not be thine, forget thy envy !

Yet O, so bright and so white is she, and I so
lowly,

Green Spring, I fear, or the world may steal
her yet.

Would that I knew her heart, what pansy or
violet

'Tis that its workings rules, to what snowdrops
holy !

Peace, poor heart, torment not thyself with vain
endeavour.

Dost thou not know her heart? So warm
and so proud, 'twould break,

The hand that confides in hers a moment to
forsake !

Once what Myvanwy loves, she loves for ever !

VII

THE ORCHARD

O LATENESS sweeter than May's first hope, O
unexpected September!

Thy sweetness how shall I tell?

O laden orchard, O bending chance, and she in
the fruited bower!

True as the ripening peach to its taste is destiny
to her hour.

Love, ripened yesterday, fell:

Its utter sweetness let me remember.

In the sacred hush of a maiden's mien is shut
her spirit's emotion,

Remote in the stars of her eyes.

How feeds the tongue-tied lover his gaze at her
heaven's far lustrous fire!

By her softly breaking sea he dreams, and
trembles with his desire.

For the passionate pearls he sighs

In the peaceful depths of that silent ocean.

Vainly ! But to the one ripe hour his bliss shall
destiny envy,
Her sweetness, in green leaves now.
Ah myriad, myriad seemed the days and months
how vainly I sighed,
And the very summer sank to my heart, and
flower by flower hope died :
But late, to the one sere bough
Deeper than autumn coloured Myvanwy.

'Twas all an orchard. Wild as the leaves that
gold to the falling fluttered,
With desperate, swayed desire,
To her bright, irrevocable face, as pale and
departing she stood,
I leaned as the burning autumn leans to the sun
in the blossomless wood ;
In her dreaming ear my fire,
My breaking heart in her ear I uttered.

It seemed with the passion of my words the dusk
of the thicket was rifted,
The expecting leaves were hushed,
When O, the wonder ! the sudden bliss ! as if
the shadow-grown peach
Above me, suddenly, without sun, should colour
deep at my speech,
She turned, ah ! sweetly she blushed !
Her glorious eyes upon me she lifted,

Full of infinite pity and love. In the gorgeous
waning September
I swerved, too happy to look,
And whilst, as if heavy-fruited, my heart hung
laden with its romance,
Hesitating to me she came where hushed I stood
in a trance,
My hand in her hand took
As in a dream too sweet to remember.

Its bashful boughs and its conscious leaves do the
red of apples bury,
Its mist the purple of plums,
The heart of a girl from day's broad eye, the
gaudy curious light,
In a shadow stiller than August hangs her pity
and shame and delight ;
But her, O, her speech comes
Sweet and direct as the taste of a cherry.

O me, what cruel misery then for my useless
sake did you suffer,
Dearest, what helpless pain.
Forgive me, forgive me! Do but see how
washed with the storm and wet,
Ripe and wonderful in the leaves the fragrant
apple is set.
Ah! and for me too, rain
And storm this autumn have seemed the rougher.

Speechless, incredulous I stand with all that her
sweet tongue granted :

She gazes into my eyes,

Her beautiful face put back she smiles, and O,
the approaching bliss !

Of my happy eyes the feverish lids intoxicates
with a kiss.

With the sweet of that surprise,

The touch of her lips, I swoon enchanted.

VIII

Where breathes who bloomless left the meadows ?

She !

Grave, in the wintriness of thee ?

Her laughter might have thrilled the dead,

So real she seemed, so white and red :

Gone, and the aching world she widows

With me !

O, of her presence any rumour,

Spring,

News of her sweetness canst thou bring ?

In that mysterious underground

What charm, what fire, what fragrance bound ?

There, from whence bursts the whole bright
summer

On wing !

Her glorious kinsfolk, that forsook us,

Wake :

Each lily, for the light's own sake.

But she, more strong, more swift to bloom,

Kept captive in the cold earth's gloom,

Will she not with the beaming crocus

Upbreak ?

Too well thy heart, bereaved lover,
Knows,
'Tis dust that did her bloom compose:
And she, so vivid and so sweet,
Is now a name, an image fleet;
All that the stars remember of her,
A rose!

IX

WHISPERING SLEEP

ARE not thy hands of honey, thy gifts of honey-suckle,
 Brother sweet of the breeze, wooing and
 whispering Sleep?
Soft at our ears like a lover's thy vague lips
 tenderly murmur
 "Kiss me!" they seem to say, "give me, poor
 heart; but a kiss."
Then our anguish dims, care fades with the
 fading lattice;
 Into a lovely land wander we all unawares!
O, into what sweet land didst thou this hour
 bewitch me?
 Wakeful, in tears, I lay, thinking of her who
 is dead,
Wishing, longing for her, my heart's beloved,
 who left me—
 Left me, and never once turned to regard me
 again.
Never then shall I see a soft face over me leaning,
 Feel a gentle hand touching me, never again!

Those adorable ways I now must only remember,
Only wish for in vain, sweetness irrevocable !
Sobbing to be with her, I heard a kind voice
near me

Whispering softly, "Hush ! weeper, this agony
cease.

Grieve not now any more, nor with rending sobs
afflict thee ;

Wouldst thou be with her ? O but accompany
me !

Come, O come ; for I know the grasses where
she is sitting,

And I know the flowers nodding in crowds at
her feet.

Past the shadowy river, the river forgetfully
gliding . . .

Lay but thy drooping head, sorrower, lay upon
me."

X

LAMENT

OVER thy head, in joyful wanderings
Through heaven's wide arches free,
Birds revelling go, with music in their wings ;
And from the blue, rough sea
The fishes flash and leap.
There is a life of loveliest things
O'er thee, so fast asleep !

In the deep West the heavens grow heavenlier
Even after eve ; and still
The glorious stars remember to appear.
The roses on the hill
Are fragrant as before.
Only thy face, of all that's dear,
I shall see never more.

XI

THOUGHTS of a mother, blissful solemn thoughts :
Hush, this is he, whose breath all being unbars ;
My bosom supports him, he my bosom supports,
Last spectacle to surprise the ancient stars.

Hush, the wide heaven gazes : this is he,
All things forbode him, herald of all bliss,
Without whom beauteous eyes could never be,
Nor paradise await the lover's kiss.

Hush, do not wake him ; with shut lids he lies,
Too tender with a moonbeam to commerce,
For whose profound and vindicating eyes
Immortal poets build immortal verse.

He, for whose sake the world existence keeps,
Lies breathing in the softest of all sleeps !

XII

ELEGY

THOU who has followed far with eyes of love
The rustling virgin sights of spring to-day,
Sad soul, what dost thou in this happy grove?
Hast thou no pipe to touch, no strain to play,
Where Nature smiles so fair and seems to ask a
lay?

Ah, she needs none! She is too beautiful.
How should I sing her? for my heart would tire,
Seeking a lovelier verse each time to cull,
In striving still to pitch my music higher.
Lovelier than any Muse is she who gives the
fire!

No impulse I beseech, my strains are vile.
To escape thee, Nature, restless here I rove;
Look not so sweet on me, avert thy smile!
Oh cease at length this fevered breast to move.
I have loved thee in vain, I cannot speak my
love.

Here sense with apathy seems gently wed ;
The gloom is starred with flowers ; the unseen
trees
Spread thick and softly real above my head ;
And the far birds add music to the peace,
In this dark place of sleep, where whispers never
cease.

Hush then, my pipe, vain is thy passion here ;
Vain is the burning bosom of desire !
For ever hushed, let me this silence hear,
As a sad Muse in the melodious choir
Hushes her voice, to catch the happier voices
by her.

Deep-shaded will I lie, and deeper yet
In night, where not a leaf its neighbour knows ;
Forget the shining of the stars, forget
The vernal visitation of the rose ;
And far from all delights prepare my heart's repose.

Strive how I may, I cannot slumber so ;
Still burns that sleepless beauty on the mind.
Still insupportable those visions glow :
And hark ! my spirit's aspirations find
An answer in the leaves, a warning on the
wind.

O crave not silence thou ! too soon, too sure
Shall Autumn come, and through these branches
weep;

Soon birds shall cease and flowers no more endure,
And thou beneath the mould unwilling creep,
And silent soon shalt be in that eternal sleep.

Green still it is, where that fair goddess strays :
Then follow till around thee all be sere.
Lose not a vision of her passing face,
Nor miss the sound of her soft robes, that here
Sweep over the wet leaves of the fast-falling year !

XIII

THE EXILE

SLEEP, sweet sleep, O not so soon forsake me,
Nor in desolation leave complete
The lost exile ! Wherefore dost thou wake me,
Or what sound is that, so far and sweet ?

Sundered here, than sad oblivion deeper,
What articulate thing remembers me ?
Me, the abandoned, world-forgotten sleeper
In this rain-beat cavern by the sea.

Ceased it is, that rain ! From out my prison
Gaze I, sad with unrefreshing sleep ;
Through the parted hills as in a vision
Wild and gray appears the troubled deep.

Wherefore, heart forlorn, that mountains bury,
Lean'st thou to the world so wistful yet,
Though forgotten, for some fragmentary
Sweetness listening ? Utterly forget !

What melodious life of blast and moor,
Or what forest fluctuating grand,
Calls me ? Hush, thou melancholy wooer !
I have known, alas ! a lovelier land.

Frustrate, wild for all thy gold endeavour,
Autumn, dost thou shake thy relics free ?
There are leaves that fade and yet for ever
Cling unfalling. Hush, and let me be !

In the caverns of oblivion fortunate
Let me lie, an alien even to fate ;
Sleep unwounded of them, those importunate
Murmurs—murmurs that commiserate.

Is it some caught rumour of the city,
London, through the night, immense, apart ?
Peace ! thou whisperer of perfidious pity :
There a million faces, not one heart.

Me no more the beauteous world shall witness
Here beside the sea's remorseless beat,
Obdurate, hard to every human sweetness !
I with the disdainful silence treat.

Only when the storm-pent moon outstealing,
Gazes down compassionately bright,
Then I quiver for a moment, feeling
Something almost human in that light.

Once again, and tenderer, closer falling,
To my thought, what tones, familiar, dear ?
O, what voices, by my own name calling
To me ? On my arm I rise to hear.

Charmed I listen, and that sound comes sweeter
On my heart than angel melodies.
Sleep and exile fade, grow incomplete,
In that music. Home is in mine eyes.

Heavenlier now it falls o'er heath and hollow,
Slow retires, a mitigated roar ;
All impassioned I uprise and follow,
Lost in dreams, towards the voiceful shore.

Lost in dreams I follow ; and a vision
And a trance doth all my heart surprise :
O what happy sights are these arisen ?
Well my soul remembers paradise !

Lovely as of old, loved mountains hover,
Valleys that with vast regret I see ;
Edens sweet, my heart would fain recover :—
Yet far sweeter inexpressibly,

All the heaven of dim beloved faces
I have wept to see, swims undefined ;
Hands that I have held, my hand embraces ;
And I gaze with rushing tears half blind.

Is it you indeed, afflicted shadows,
Is it you from that tremendous sphere,
Come again to visit the sweet meadows,
Apparitions from a home severe ?

Ah, disdain me not, nor these bright regions,
Solemn musers in that dread abode !
One poor land you loved of all earth's legions :
See, it is our own familiar sod.

Clasp me to you, calm these burning wishes !
My delight reprove not yet awhile.
Each cold cheek I'll cover with sad kisses ;
Cheeks too conscious of the grave to smile.

But what is it, ere my heart rejoices,
Comes upon me with that moan of hate ?
Hark ! a sound between the wind's vexed voices ;
The wild tide that turns in haughty state.

"Stay, unlocking arms, break not asunder."
Mad I cry, the mad blasts answer me.
Bursting harshly near, deep comes in thunder,
Surge on surge, the loud disdainful sea.

Whelmed in that great world of sound I hearken,
Wakeful, solitary, hushed in fear.
All too real, the endless waters darken ;
Giant space, my sight can hardly bear.

Was't for this that thou, remorseless breaker,
In my cavern whispering murmuring bliss
Drew'st in dreams my spirit, to forsake her
Here 'mid thunders and immensities ?

Deafened, mocked with desolate sprays, all
banished,

Laughing foe, yet will I baffle thee:
Here with faces of farewell they vanished,
Here beside the tinged, mysterious sea !

Whither fled ye, my swift thoughts outleaping,
Spirits ? But now a form companionless
Stood amidst you, passionately weeping,
Thronged with soft and mournful presences.

O 'mid sprays abandoned they perceive me.
For a moment pause they, each turned Shade,
Ere they plunge into the tempest, leave me,
Me on alien shores for ever sad.

Turn back at my cry, sweet phantoms ! linger
For me : see, I reach across this verge :
Lean out of the winds one pitying finger ;
Snatch me from the insane unpitying surge.

From deaf waters that with ireful gestures
Bar me, and vociferating sweep,
To your sorrowful beloved vestures
Over the spurned breakers will I leap.

In your bosom like a stormblast bear me
On to that sweet land my spirit craves.
From shores insupportable, O tear me !
With a cry I rush into the waves.

But the haughty breakers, mountain after
Mountain, listen, come convulsed with foam.
Back they fling me with derisive laughter,
Shouting, "Exile, back unto thy home!"

Gasping, buffeted with foam stupendous,
Eyes and mouth full of the alien wave,
From those cruel, glittering seas tremendous,
Desperate, as a man out of his grave,

Back I struggle; and beat senseless, reeling,
To some last impossible deity
Hands in agony I stretch appealing
Upwards. Infinite sky, and infinite sea!

In despair I look up wide and wistful
Through the tears that blind me, through the
spray,
Even to that dim limit, heaving tristful;
Lo, a single sail-speck far away!

Whence art thou, angelic apparition;
Whither, like a hope across me thrown,
Hastening? What the land, and what the mission?
Surely that I weep for, that alone!

Heaven be in thy sails, O unknown vessel,
Till those heavenly shores grow into view.
See! my spirit, with no storm to wrestle,
Follows, goes on wind wings thither too.

For long miles into the heart of morning,
Miles and miles, far over lands and seas,
Past enchanted regions of forewarning,
Dawns at last the land that dims all these.

Go, like lightning: be the imaginary
Wings to bliss that exiles weary for.
Here, O hard compulsion, must I tarry.
Hie thee, hie thee, sweet ambassador !

Hasten, though the immeasurable distance
Break my heart, imploring, forced to stay ;
Not a surge, and not a blast's resistance !
Quiet be the waters of thy way.

Mine alone be all this deaf commotion.
Let the breakers lash me with their scorn
O'er the unfooted, vast, relentless ocean
I would still remember, though I mourn.

XIV

TO STEPHEN AND MAY

SOMETHING remembering, I sigh
Beneath this glorious Indian sky.
He grieves me, tender, large, and bright,
Hesperus in the western night ;
And with sweet half forgotten things
Zephyrus loads his western wings.
What airs of springtime's very home,
What laughing freshness as of foam
Make languid all the Eastern day ?
I start ; I think of Stephen and May !

Stephen and May ! two names that run
To daffodils and April sun ;
Musical sounds that fancy weaves
With the magic of the winds and leaves ;
Sounds like the wash of western seas,
Full of the foam, full of the breeze !
I cry out suddenly, and through
This odorous darkness look for you,
"Enchanting friends, that fill my soul.
A million waters 'twixt us roll !
O, sunset on my heart shall weigh
Till I revisit Stephen and May.

